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Henry Hastings Hall to W S Hall, 1 June 1877

Perth, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1877

My dear brother,

I scarcely know how to begin this letter, I have such very sad news to communicate. Our poor dear sister's days are numbered, she is dying in the Perth Hospital. I think Adeline has written to you, so you may be in a measure prepared for this sorrowful tidings. It was a miracle that she survived those 20 days on shipboard. She wanted a tender *womanly* nurse – which I fear she had not. She was in Fremantle a week before I knew anything about her arrival, and then in my ignorance of the state of her health, I wrote what must have appeared an unfeeling letter — something of this kind — “As I had not received any communication about her, I trusted the voyage and change of climate had restored her health — that I did not know what her views were, whether she was coming to us, or not”, little knowing that the dear creature was unable to write, and her life was hanging in the balance. I am thankful to say Mrs Duffield cleared away the darkness somewhat, but I was too unwell to travel and there were other reasons why I could not leave home at a very short notice. I knew from Adeline that my utmost wish was fulfilled — Mrs. Lazenby, good soul! had taken her to Perth and was nursing her — and I hoped all might be well. The next mail brought me a most kind and thoughtful letter from Mr Steere who supposed (and he was right) that I was not acquainted with the real state of the case. He said “Mrs. Steere had been to see my sister and found her most alarmingly ill — she at once sought Dr Waylen and requested him to visit her, which he did, and he pronounced her case to be a perfectly hopeless one. She has cancer of the womb, which is incurable. Dr Waylen says she ought to go into hospital as soon as there is a vacancy — as she can get proper nursing and attendance there, and I am sure she would be comfortable. Mrs Steere saw your sister again yesterday and thought her looking alarmingly ill. It is altogether a distressing case and one scarcely knows what is best to be done for her. The only difficulty would be about her daughter, who would not be allowed to live in the hospital. I thought you would like to hear exactly how matters stand” &c &c. I have given you a long

extract from this kind and manly letter. You may depend I wrote a thankful letter and told him I should (weather permitting) leave in Tuckey's boat the following morning, and also that I felt sure I should take a load of anxiety from the poor dear sufferer, by assuring her that Mrs Hall and I would take charge of the daughter and provide for her. I left the next morning and we were three days coming up. Shortly after I landed I sent a telegram to Mrs Lazenby but Dr Waylen had been summoned to Fremantle to a patient and I met him at Maloneys. He was most friendly, told me our sister was in the hospital, offered me a seat in his carriage and gave instructions to admit me to the hospital irrespective of visiting days. I saw the poor soul next day and was shocked at the change. I had made up my mind to acquaint her with her danger if it had not been done, but she knew it all, and was perfectly resigned to the will of her Heavenly Father. She had managed to write a few lines to Theodosia asking her if she would take Alice but this prayer of a dying sister was refused. The Blackwood folk thought that Henry was the most proper person, or if I declined - poor Mrs Knight. Letitia did not know *then* what I had written to Mr Steere about Alice, but she gave me Theodosia's letter to read — and I could see how anxiously she was watching my face, to read the fate of the unfortunate girl. At once I turned to her with a smile, though my heart was breaking — and the sunshine of the soul that lighted her face, before I had time to utter a word, proved to me how truly she had read my thoughts. She knew we had determined before I left home to take the poor orphan, with all the responsibility anxiety and unpleasantness — and like a brave dear girl she was happy and calmly looked upon death apparently without a fear. Mrs Steere was delighted and on my second visit to the hospital made me cry like a baby at her kind words. The Leakes have been most kind and attentive, and our poor dear sister has had so many visitors that the Doctor has had to refuse half of them. I saw her today and both I and Mrs Lazenby thought she looked much better, she has not so much pain now — and her face seems more natural. You I am sure have done more than your share and may God bless you for it and help you out of your difficulties. I only regret you did not write me by the same vessel she came in. The disease is of two years standing and Dr Waylen wonders how she could have borne up against it so long. He told me she might live a month. I have so much writing to do I hope you will communicate with our nephews. Tell them the sad news — and tell them their poor dear mother is longing for the time when the weary shall be at rest. I

had to borrow a few pounds to come here with, but I trust I shall be able to meet the funeral expenses &c &c but you know my very limited means and I can only trust in Providence to help me through the fiery ordeal. Our sister says her dear boys will help, but for the present, *at least* I can hope for no earthly aid. With kind love to your dear wife Anders and all the little ones.

Your affecte brother

H H HALL